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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 005031

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SUBJECT: COORDINATOR FOR COUNTERTERRORISM MEETS IRAQI  
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

Classified By: COUNSELOR FOR POLITICAL-MILITARY AFFAIRS DAVID C. LITT F  
OR REASONS 1.4 (a), (b), (c), (d)

1. (S) SUMMARY: Ambassador Henry A. Crumpton, the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (S/CT), on December 8, 2005 in Baghdad, met with Dr. Mowaffak al-Rubaie, Iraq's National Security Advisor. Rubaie described the dual role he plays as National Security Advisor and as head of the National Intelligence Coordination Commission (NICC). He explained that Iraq lacks a single person responsible specifically for counterterrorism policy, but hastened to add that he believes his current positions make him best suited to fill this role. He expressed concern that the U.S. overreacts when Iraqi officials discuss security issues with Iran, and wondered whether U.S. and Iraqi policies on counterterrorism are really in harmony. Rubaie and Ambassador Crumpton agreed to meet in Washington D.C. with a small group of senior national security officials from both sides to further discuss strategic CT issues affecting Iraq and the region. Ambassador Crumpton was accompanied to the meeting by S/CT Regional Affairs Officer Margaret Hawthorne and Acting Counselor for Pol-Mil Affairs. END SUMMARY.

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FRANK QUESTIONS  
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2. (S) Rubaie opened the meeting by explaining that there is no single person responsible for counterterrorism policy in Iraq, but that he views himself as the most logical choice for such a role, given his current duties as National Security Advisor and chairman of the NICC. He also said he agrees with President Bush's recent remarks that Iraq is the principal front in the war on terror. Therefore, he continued, it is critical that we coordinate our activities closely. That said, he fears we do not cooperate enough and believes that U.S. and Iraqi views on terrorism are not always in accord. As an example he cited what he considered excessive USG concern whenever an Iraqi delegation visited Tehran to discuss regional security or other issues.

3. (S) Rubaie continued that he had personal concerns about the Iraqi-U.S. relationship. "Are U.S. counterterrorism objectives the same as Iraq's? Can they be adjusted or realigned to match?" In his view, the major, long-term terrorism threat is posed by the Baathists, while the immediate threat comes from the Takfiris (religious extremists). He questioned whether the U.S. agreed with this assessment. He asserted that we needed to consult more closely on our negative roles and improve cooperation.

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DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS  
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4. (S) Ambassador Crumpton thanked Rubaie for his frank questions and acknowledged that differences and gaps may exist in our views on terrorism. He welcomed the opportunity to engage in a strategic discussion with Iraq on this subject. For example, Ambassador Crumpton said he does not agree with Rubaie's analysis as to what constitutes the long-term terrorist threat. While Rubaie says the Baathists are the real threat, on a broader, regional scale the U.S. sees a global insurgent network that uses terrorism as a tactic. This network also collects intelligence, engages in counter-intelligence operations, successfully conducts high quality information operations, and wages guerrilla war. Iraq is a key battleground. This global insurgency is the greatest long-term threat, not the Baathists. These insurgents are trying to hijack and take advantage of the political divisions in Iraq. Our goal should be to split the Iraqi insurgents away from the foreign fighters and bring them back into civil society. The U.S. and Iraq need to discuss a complementary strategic partnership to accomplish this.

5. (S) Rubaie said he agreed that the global terrorist threat is real and also agreed on the need to split them from the Baathists fighting in Iraq. But he persisted that the Arab Baath party started in the 1950's as a leftist organization, transformed into a pan-Arab, Nasserist movement, and has finally, in search of a new ideology, become an Islamist terrorist organization. They are a long term threat to stability, like Nazism, and must be destroyed. Ambassador Crumpton concurred that police and military force

must be utilized in the short-term, tactical fight but urged Rubaie to take a broader and more strategic view and recognize that ultimately the way to finally defeat this type of enemy is to build a democratic, civil society.

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"THE SHIA ARE YOUR NATURAL ALLIES"  
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16. (S) Citing the years of the Ottoman Empire and those that followed, Rubaie noted that historically in the long struggle against the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism, the West had relied on the Christian and Jewish populations within the Muslim world to counter extremist thought. "Today," he asked, "who are the natural enemies of the Takfiris in the Arab world? The Shia! You should utilize us to fight against them." Ambassador Crumpton countered that there are also Sunnis who are fighting extremism, citing the Jordanians, Pakistanis, and Malaysians. The U.S. welcomes partnerships with the Shia, but not to the exclusion of Sunnis. Ambassador Crumpton noted that an "Islamic Reformation" was underway; Muslim leaders must assume a greater role and work together against extremists. Rubaie agreed that the fight was within Islam and said that perversely, in a way, Usama Bin Laden has done us a favor by bringing the U.S. to Afghanistan and Iraq where not only has it liberated 27 million people, but it will also ultimately liberate the whole religion of Islam.

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VIEWS ON IRAN  
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17. (S) Ambassador Crumpton addressed Rubaie's earlier remark about Iran by noting that the U.S. sees two Irans. One is made up of young, vibrant, democratic, and entrepreneurial people. But the other is a country controlled by a small group of religious extremists who are determined to defy the international community, acquire nuclear weapons, and continue to support terrorism around the world. Iran is the major state sponsor of terrorism in the world; this is a fact that we cannot ignore, and nor should Iraq. He told Rubaie that the U.S. needs Iraq's help in dealing with the problem and would welcome a more detailed dialogue at a later date. We need to coordinate our strategies and understand where we agree and disagree. It may well be that Iran is a subject on which we will ultimately disagree. The same can be said for Saudi Arabia. Rubaie agreed on the need for a deeper discussion and cautioned that Saudi Arabia is building an ideological "nuclear weapon."

18. (S) Rubaie then said that he, too, had noticed troubling changes in Iran. He said that he used to think there was some real freedom there, but during his last visit he found the leadership to be petrified of political enemies and unable to tolerate any dissent. He said that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps members were the real mullahs of Iran and wield all the power in what has become a police state. During his recent visits, the Iranians have been hypersensitive with the Iraqis about satellite television being beamed into Iran from the Kurdish regions of Iraq, and also with the continued presence in Iraq of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq who, according to Rubaie, are an aged and disarmed group who are no threat to anyone. He said he believes Iran fears a free, independent, secular Iraq and is worried about what the millions of Iranian pilgrims who will visit Iraq in the future will see here. Ambassador Crumpton noted that young Iranians attending a free Iraqi university would be a powerful force.

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"HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?"  
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19. (S) Ambassador Crumpton next returned to another of Rubaie's first questions: "How can the U.S. help Iraq?" He suggested three ways. First, we would like to continue to help build capacity, particularly with regard to the rule of law. Second, the U.S. and Iraq should engage in serious talks about counterterrorism strategy. "What do you want? What do we want?" Together we need to point the incoming government in the right direction. Third, the U.S. can help facilitate contacts in the region between Iraq and its neighbors. The global insurgency takes advantages of border areas as safehavens, recognizing that the U.S. and others view the world as being made up of independent nation-states, and are thus ill prepared to deal with problems in border areas. The U.S. can work with Iraq and its neighbors to deny this advantage to the enemy. Ambassador Crumpton stressed that Iraq needed to forge strong counterterrorism ties with its neighbors, including Saudi Arabia. Rubaie agreed that Iraq needs immediate help in formulating a counterterrorism strategy and welcomed Ambassador Crumpton's suggestions.

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NEXT STEPS  
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10. (S) Ambassador Crumpton and Rubaie agreed that it would be beneficial to meet again circa March, perhaps after the new government is formed, to continue to explore these subjects. It was tentatively agreed that both would assemble a small group of key policymakers (no more than four or five) to meet, in Washington, and spend a day discussing the way forward. An agenda will be agreed upon in advance and each side will take the lead on two or three topics.

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COMMENT  
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11. (S) Rubaie is a strong supporter of forging close ties to Iran, but is also anxious to cement his ties to the U.S. and make himself an indispensable interlocutor. His disparaging remarks about Iran should be taken in this context.  
KHALILZAD